

## BELLARIA XLV



Monument commemorating Lucian of Samosata from Nordkirchen, Germany

### LUCIAN 1

The satirist Lucian was born c. AD 115 in Samosata, a town on the Euphrates in Syria. Whatever his native language was (Aramaic?), all schools in that part of the Roman Empire taught Greek. He trained in rhetoric, practised as an advocate, spent time in Athens, Italy, Thrace and Gaul (apparently), became interested in philosophy and died c. AD 180. His educational interests, training and natural talent gave him a very wide range of tones, styles and genres with which to mock and attack ‘the pretensions, excesses, self-contradictions and inconsistencies of the contemporary world, of the classical past idealised in the schools of rhetoric, and of the world of myth’ (Hopkinson).

### THE TRUE HISTORY

We introduce Lucian with an extract from his most famous piece (Ἀληθῆ διηγήματα, or *Vera Historia*). Announcing it as ‘true’ in the title, he immediately says it is a complete fabrication: very Lucianic. Its main interest is that it is the first known work of science fiction. It describes Lucian’s journey beyond the Pillars of Hercules where, blown of course, his ship is carried by the winds up to the moon. There the Moon king (Endymion) and Sun king are battling it out to determine who should colonise the Morning Star. The Sun wins but a peace treaty is agreed.

The passage here draws on the sort of ethnographies that we find, for example, in Herodotus, describing a wide range of physical peculiarities, customs, habits, values and practices. These contrast strongly with the Greek world, but mentions of e.g. colonisation and births from calves of the leg (cf. Zeus gestating Dionysus in his thigh) locate the reader clearly within it.



Ruth Cobb

The translation is by Keith Sidwell from his *Lucian: Chattering Courtesans and Other Sardonic Sketches* (Penguin, 2004).

## The nature of the Moon people

### 21 *In the absence of women, Lucian decides to return to Earth*

These were the peace terms they agreed. At once the wall was demolished and they returned us prisoners. When we arrived on the moon, our comrades and Endymion himself came out to meet us and greeted us with tears. Endymion wanted us to stay there with him and participate in the new colony. He promised me his own son in marriage.

I must explain that there are no women there. I had no intention of agreeing, but wanted him to send us back down to the sea below. When he realized that it was going to be impossible to persuade us to stay, he sent us on our way, after first giving us a seven-day feast.

Τοιαύτη μὲν ἡ εἰρήνη ἐγένετο· εὐθύς δὲ τεῖχος καθηρεῖτο καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους ἀπέδωσαν. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀφικόμεθα ἐς τὴν σελήνην, ὑπηντίαζον ἡμᾶς καὶ ἠσπάζοντο μετὰ δακρύων οἳ τε ἑταῖροι καὶ ὁ Ἐνδυμίων αὐτός. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἡξίου μεῖναι τε παρ' αὐτῷ καὶ κοινωνεῖν τῆς ἀποικίας, ὑπισχνούμενος δώσειν πρὸς γάμον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ παῖδα·

γυναῖκες γὰρ οὐκ εἰσὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς. ἐγὼ δὲ οὐδαμῶς ἐπειθόμην, ἀλλ' ἠξίουν ἀποπεμφθῆναι κάτω ἐς τὴν θάλατταν. ὥς δὲ ἔγνω ἀδύνατον ὄν πείθειν, ἀποπέμπει ἡμᾶς ἐστιάσας ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας.



Aubrey Beardsley

Now I want to tell you the novel and unusual things I noticed during my stay on the moon. First and foremost is the fact that they aren't engendered from women, but from the men. They employ males for marital purposes and in fact don't even know the word 'woman'. Up till the age of twenty-five every individual takes the bride's part, and after that he becomes the bridegroom.

Pregnancy occurs not in the womb but in the calf of the leg. The calf thickens when it receives the embryo. Later on they cut the leg open and bring out the baby dead. They bring them to life by exposing them to the wind with their mouths open. In my opinion it is from the moon that Greeks have learned the word 'calf', because there it is the calf that calves instead of the womb.

δὲ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ διατρίβων ἐν τῇ σελήνῃ κατενόησα καινὰ καὶ παράδοξα, ταῦτα βούλομαι εἰπεῖν. πρῶτα μὲν τὸ μὴ ἐκ γυναικῶν γεννᾶσθαι αὐτούς, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρρένων· γάμοις γὰρ τοῖς ἄρρεσι χρῶνται καὶ οὐδὲ ὄνομα γυναικὸς ὅλως ἴσασι. μέχρι μὲν οὖν πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι ἐτῶν γαμεῖται ἕκαστος, ἀπὸ δὲ τούτων γαμεῖ αὐτός·

κύουσι δὲ οὐκ ἐν τῇ νηδύϊ, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς γαστροκνημίαις· ἐπειδὴν γὰρ συλλάβῃ τὸ ἔμβρυον, παχύνεται ἡ κνήμη, καὶ χρόνῳ ὕστερον ἀνατεμόντες ἐξάγουσι νεκρά, ἐκθέντες δὲ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὸν ἄνεμον κεχηνότα ζωοποιοῦσιν. δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ ἐς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐκεῖθεν ἦκειν τῆς γαστροκνημίας τοῦνομα, ὅτι παρ' ἐκείνοις ἀντὶ γαστρὸς κυοφορεῖ.

### *The Treemen*

My next account, though, is more extraordinary still. There is among them a race of people known as the Treemen. They are born in the following manner. They cut off a man's right testicle and plant it in the earth. From this there grows up an enormous tree, fleshy, like a phallus. But it also has branches and leaves.

It bears as its crop acorns a cubit long. When they are ripe, they harvest them and hatch out the men. However, they have prosthetic genitals - the rich have them made of ivory, the poor of wood - and it is with these that they mount and have intercourse with their male consorts. **23** When the individual grows old, he does not die. He just dissolves into the air like smoke.

μεῖζον δὲ τούτου ἄλλο διηγῆσομαι. γένος ἐστὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀνθρώπων οἱ καλούμενοι Δενδρίται, γίνεται δὲ τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον. ὄρχιν ἀνθρώπου τὸν δεξιὸν ἀποτεμόντες ἐν γῆ φυτεύουσιν, ἐκ δὲ αὐτοῦ δένδρον ἀναφύεται μέγιστον, σάρκινον, οἶον φαλλός· ἔχει δὲ καὶ κλάδους καὶ φύλλα·

ὁ δὲ καρπὸς ἐστὶ βάλανος πηχυαῖος τὸ μέγεθος. ἐπειδὴν οὖν πεπανθῶσιν, τρυγήσαντες αὐτὰς ἐκκολάπτουσι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. αἰδοῖα μέντοι πρόσθετα ἔχουσιν, οἱ μὲν ἐλεφάντινα, οἱ δὲ πένητες αὐτῶν ξύλινα, καὶ διὰ τούτων ὀχεύουσι καὶ πλησιάζουσι τοῖς γαμέταις τοῖς ἑαυτῶν. **23** ἐπειδὴν δὲ γηράσῃ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οὐκ ἀποθνήσκει, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ καπνὸς διαλυόμενος ἀήρ γίνεται.

*Diet, sexual practices and looks*



Aubrey Beardsley

**23-24** Everyone has the same diet. They light a fire and barbecue frogs over the coals (there are vast numbers of them there, flying around in the air). While the frogs are cooking, they sit round the fire as if it were a table and feast by gulping down the vapour of the rising smoke. Such is their solid intake. For drink, though, they squeeze air into a cup, and it yields a liquid like dew.

They do not urinate and defecate. In fact, they do not have orifices in the same places we do. Boys do not offer their behinds for intercourse, but the backs of their legs, just above the calf, where they do have an opening.

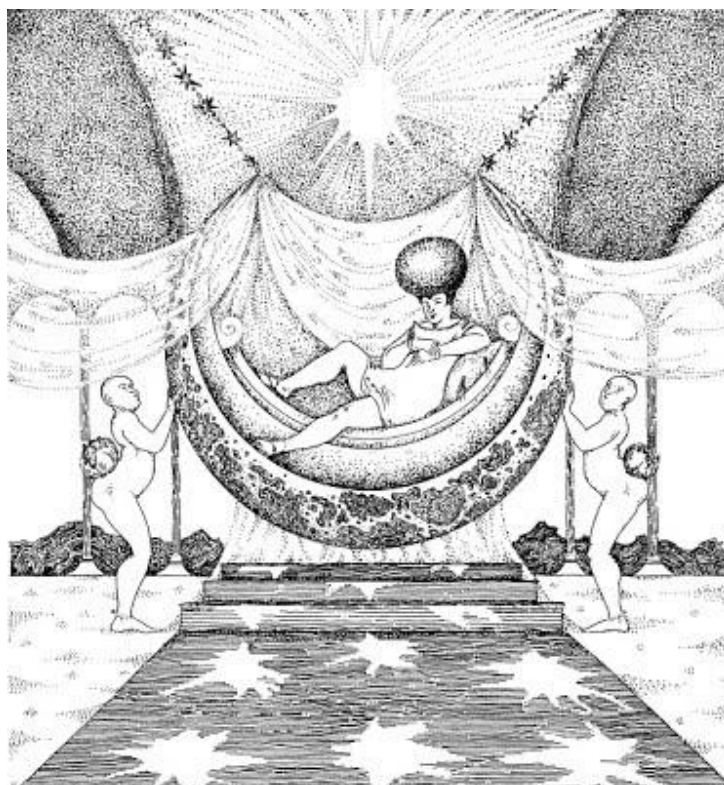
Among them it is the bald and hairless who are considered beautiful. They evince a deep disgust at men with flowing locks. On the comets, it's the other way round: there they consider the long-haired beautiful. I found this out because there were some visitors from that region who told me.

### *Other physical features*

τροφή δὲ πᾶσιν ἢ αὐτῆ· ἐπειδὴν γὰρ πῦρ ἀνακαύσωσιν, βατράχους ὀπτῶσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθράκων· πολλοὶ δὲ παρ' αὐτοῖς εἰσιν ἐν τῷ ἀέρι πετόμενοι· ὀπτωμένων δὲ περικαθεσθέντες ὥσπερ δὴ περὶ τράπεζαν κάπτουσιν τὸν ἀναθυμιώμενον καπνὸν καὶ εὐωχοῦνται. σίτω μὲν δὴ τρέφονται τοιοῦτω· ποτὸν δὲ αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν ἀῆρ ἀποθλιβόμενος εἰς κύλικα καὶ ὑγρὸν ἀνιείς ὥσπερ δρόσον.

οὐ μὲν ἀπουροῦσιν γε καὶ ἀφοδεύουσιν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τέττηνται ἢ ἡμεῖς, οὐδὲ τὴν συνουσίαν οἱ παῖδες ἐν ταῖς ἔδραις παρέχουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐν ταῖς ἰγνύσιν ὑπὲρ τὴν γαστροκνημίαν· ἐκεῖ γὰρ εἰσι τεττημένοι.

Καλὸς δὲ νομίζεται παρ' αὐτοῖς ἢν πού τις φαλακρὸς καὶ ἄκομος ἦ, τοὺς δὲ κομήτας καὶ μυσάττονται. ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν κομητῶν ἀστέρων τούναντίον τοὺς κομήτας καλοὺς νομίζουσιν· ἐπεδήμουν γὰρ τινες, οἳ καὶ περὶ ἐκείνων διηγοῦντο.



Aubrey Beardsley (?)

They also grow beards just above their knees. They have no nails on their feet, but have only one toe. Above their backsides, each of them has a cabbage which protrudes like a tail. It's always fresh and doesn't get damaged when they fall on their backs.

**24** When they blow their noses, what comes out is a very pungent honey. And when they work hard or take exercise, their whole body sweats milk. In fact, they make cheese from this, by dribbling in a little of the honey.

**A** They make a smooth oil from onions which smells as good as myrrh. They have many water-bearing vines, since the berries on the bunches resemble hailstones. In my opinion, it's when the wind blows and shakes those vines that hail falls on us, because the bunches are broken apart.

**B** They use their stomachs as pouches, putting in there whatever they need, since they can be opened and closed again. They don't seem to have any innards, excepting only the thick hair with which the inside of their bellies is covered. Their young withdraw into this when they are cold.

καὶ μὴν καὶ γένεια φύουσιν μικρὸν ὑπὲρ τὰ γόνατα. καὶ ὄνυχας ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν οὐκ ἔχουσιν, ἀλλὰ πάντες εἰσὶν μονοδάκτυλοι. ὑπὲρ δὲ τὰς πυγὰς ἐκάστω αὐτῶν κράμβη ἐκπέφυκε μακρὰ ὥσπερ οὐρά, θάλλουσα ἐς αἰὶ καὶ ὑπτίου ἀναπίπτοντος οὐ κατακλωμένη.

**24** ἀπομύττονται δὲ μέλι δριμύτατον· κάπειδαν ἢ πονῶσιν ἢ γυμνάζωνται, γάλακτι πᾶν τὸ σῶμα ἰδροῦσιν, ὥστε καὶ τυροὺς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ πήγνυνται, ὀλίγον τοῦ μέλιτος ἐπιστάξαντες·

**A** ἔλαιον δὲ ποιοῦνται ἀπὸ τῶν κρομμύων πάνυ λιπαρόν τε καὶ εὐῶδες ὥσπερ μύρον. ἀμπέλους δὲ πολλὰς ἔχουσιν ὑδροφόρους· αἱ γὰρ ῥᾶγες τῶν βοτρύων εἰσὶν ὥσπερ χάλαζα, καί, ἐμοὶ δοκεῖν, ἐπειδὴν ἐμπεσῶν ἄνεμος διασειῆσιν τὰς ἀμπέλους ἐκείνας, τότε πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταπίπτει ἢ χάλαζα διαρραγέντων τῶν βοτρύων.

**B** τῇ μέντοι γαστρὶ ὅσα πήρα χρῶνται τιθέντες ἐν αὐτῇ ὄσων δέονται· ἀνοικτὴ γὰρ αὐτοῖς αὕτη καὶ πάλιν κλειστὴ ἐστίν· ἐντέρων δὲ οὐδὲν ὑπάρχειν αὐτῇ φαίνεται, ἢ τοῦτο μόνον, ὅτι δασεῖα πᾶσα ἔντοσθε καὶ λάσιός ἐστίν, ὥστε καὶ τὰ νεογνά, ἐπειδὴν ῥιγῶση, ἐς ταύτην ὑποδύεται.

*The rich, eyes and ears*

**25** The rich wear clothes of soft glass. Those of the poor are of woven copper, since those regions are rich in copper. They work the copper by moistening it with water, as we do with wool. As regards the sort of eyes they have, I hesitate to mention it, in case anyone should think that I am lying because the story is so incredible.

None the less, I'll tell you this as well. They have removable eyes and anyone who wants can take his own out and keep them safe until he needs to see again. Then he puts them in and has his vision back. Lots of people who have lost their own eyes borrow those of others to see with. There are some people, the wealthy, who keep a large store of spares. For ears they have plane-tree leaves, except for the people grown from acorns. This is the only group to have wooden ones.

**25** Ἐσθῆς δὲ τοῖς μὲν πλουσίοις ὑαλινὴ μαλθακὴ, τοῖς πένησι δὲ χαλκῇ ὑφαντῇ· πολὺχαλκα γὰρ τὰ ἐκεῖ χωρία, καὶ ἐργάζονται τὸν χαλκὸν ὕδατι ὑποβρέξαντες

ὥσπερ τὰ ἔρια. περὶ μέντοι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, οἷους ἔχουσιν, ὀκνῶ μὲν εἰπεῖν, μή τις με νομίση ψεύδεσθαι διὰ τὸ ἄπιστον τοῦ λόγου.

ὅμως δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἐρῶ· τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς περιαιρετοὺς ἔχουσι, καὶ ὁ βουλόμενος ἐξελὼν τοὺς αὐτοῦ φυλάττει ἔστ' ἂν δεηθῆ ἰδεῖν· οὕτω δὲ ἐνθέμενος ὀρᾷ· καὶ πολλοὶ τοὺς σφετέρους ἀπολέσαντες παρ' ἄλλων χρησάμενοι ὀρῶσιν. εἰσὶ δ' οἱ καὶ πολλοὺς ἀποθέτους ἔχουσιν, οἱ πλοῦσιοι. τὰ ὤτα δὲ πλατάνων φύλλα ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς πλὴν γε τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν βαλάνων· ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ μόνοι ξύλινα ἔχουσιν.

### *Spying on Earth*



From the film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)

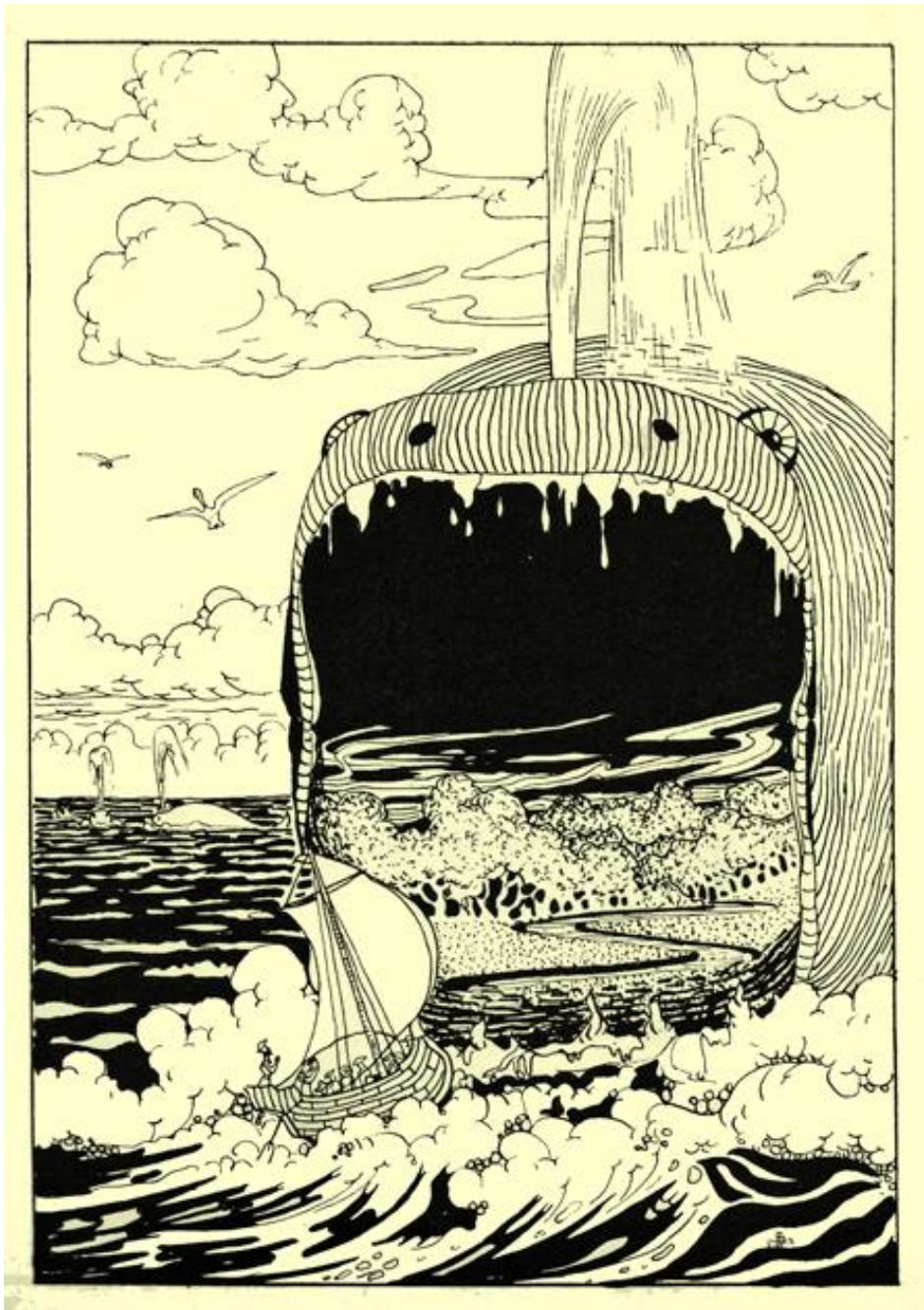
26 In the king's palace, I saw yet another wonder. There is a huge mirror positioned over a shallow well. Anyone who descends into the well hears everything being said among our people on earth.

If he looks into the mirror, he sees every city and every people as though he were standing next to them. On that occasion I saw my family and the whole of my native land, but whether they saw me as well I cannot further securely attest. Anyone who does not believe that this is the way things are will know that I am telling the truth if he ever gets there himself.

26 καὶ μὴν καὶ ἄλλο θαῦμα ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις ἐθεασάμην· κάτοπτρον μέγιστον κεῖται ὑπὲρ φρέατος οὐ πάνυ βαθέος. ἂν μὲν οὖν εἰς τὸ φρέαρ καταβῆ τις, ἀκούει πάντων τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ γῆ λεγομένων,

ἐὰν δὲ εἰς τὸ κάτοπτρον ἀποβλέψη, πάσας μὲν πόλεις, πάντα δὲ ἔθνη ὀρᾷ ὥσπερ ἐφ'esτώς ἐκάστοις· τότε καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους ἐγὼ ἐθεασάμην καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν πατρίδα, εἰ δὲ κάκεῖνοι ἐμὲ ἐώρων, οὐκέτι ἔχω τὸ ἀσφαλὲς εἰπεῖν. ὅστις δὲ ταῦτα μὴ πιστεύει οὕτως ἔχειν, ἂν ποτε καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκεῖσε ἀφίκηται, εἴσεται ὡς ἀληθῆ λέγω.

Lucian and his men do finally get back to Earth, where they are swallowed by a whale ... but that is only one incident in the continuing story.



A. Payne Garnett